



In Touch South India

Headlines from the U.S. Consulate General Chennai



February — March 2008

Volume: V, Issue: 1

<http://chennai.usconsulate.gov>

Indo-U.S. Cooperation in Health

"Read it, and heed it," U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Mike Leavitt told students at Loyola College in Chennai on January 7, 2008. Secretary Leavitt was referring to a new publication entitled "Celebrating Life," which is now used by peer educators at more than 800 colleges in Tamil Nadu to dispel myths about HIV/AIDS and to teach students how to maintain a healthy life style. Earlier on the same day, Secretary Leavitt visited the Government Hospital of Thoracic Medicine in Tambaram, a national model for providing high-quality and comprehensive care for HIV patients, including many children.

At the invitation of Union Health and Family Welfare Minister Anbumani Ramadoss, Secretary Leavitt, accompanied by Andrew von Eschenbach, Commissioner of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), was in Chennai, Hyderabad, Kochi and New Delhi from January 6 to 11, 2008. The purpose of the visit was to build on America's successful and ever-expanding partnership with India in health and science. Not only do India and the United States cooperate in the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, but they are also working closely together to vaccinate 165 million children against polio and to research and control tuberculosis, malaria, rotavirus, avian influenza and other deadly dis-

eases. Several hundred Indian physicians and scientists train in the United States at the Centers for Disease Control and National Institutes of Health.

The focus of Secretary Leavitt's visit to Hyderabad and Kochi where he visited major pharmaceutical manufacturers and spice producers, respectively, was food and drug safety. Secretary Leavitt noted the common interest on the part of Americans and Indians to ensure that the products they import and consume are safe and of good quality. He agreed to support Dr. Ramadoss in the creation of a Central Drug Authority in India.



U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Mike Leavitt, right, and Michael Friedman of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control—Chennai, center, interact with staff members of the Government Hospital of Thoracic Medicine in Tambaram

Secretary Leavitt was impressed by recent strides in health care and medical research in India. He was proud of the Indo-U.S. partnership that has saved thousands of lives and has the potential to benefit millions more. And he was especially touched by the families in Tambaram that are bravely, and often

successfully, dealing with serious illness. In health, as in so many other areas, India and the United States working together are greater than their sum of the parts. Secretary Leavitt's visit will spur more cooperation so that the people of India, the United States and indeed the entire world can lead longer, healthier and happier lives.

Get In Touch

Consulate main web link:

<http://chennai.usconsulate.gov>

Other links:

<http://americanlibrary.in.library.net>

<http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov>

<http://www.usaep.org>

<http://buyusa.gov/india>

Consulate Phone Number:

044-2857-4000

Consulate Fax Number:

044-2811-2020



Elsewhere in this edition of "In Touch South India" you can read about the American Library's participation in the January 2008 Chennai Book Fair. I had the pleasure of visiting the American Library stall at the Book Fair, and I was impressed by the excellent job done by the Library staff in presenting the Library to fairgoers and by the great interest that fairgoers displayed in the Library and its offerings. Indeed, the Library enrolled a record number of new members and new *SPAN* Magazine subscribers during the Fair. I am confident that the new members will not be disappointed. They will join the many existing members in enjoying what is one of the best libraries in south India, certainly the best for American studies, literature and periodicals. They also will gain access to a unique selection of on-line databases and audio-visual holdings. The American Library is one of my favorite places, somewhere I could spend hours every week. This, the 60th anniversary year of the American Library, is a great time for "In Touch South India" readers and others to visit and get to know the Library. I wish the Library a very happy 60th birthday, and I wish all of its patrons very happy reading.

-David T. Hopper, Consul General

From Boston to Dandi

What do the Boston Tea Party of 1773 and the Salt March to Dandi in 1930 have in common? Both were acts of protest that helped give birth to great democratic nations. And both were



Republic Day skit on the American and Indian independence movements

reenacted by the children of the Chennai Corporation Middle School – Thousand Lights in an imaginatively conceived skit at the Consul General's residence. The Republic Day (January 26) performance, celebrating India's freedom struggle and showing the influence of America's fight for

independence, concluded with the question: "What is there on earth that America and India cannot achieve together?"

Following the performance, more than 100 Corporation School children joined the employees of the Consulate General for a sunny afternoon of games, crafts and a picnic lunch. In bidding farewell to the children, Consul General David Hopper commented: "We have seen today that America's red, white and blue mix very well with India's saffron, white and green."

Basketball Diplomacy

After national past-times cricket and hockey, basketball too is gaining fans in India. For these fans and to encourage even more, the Consulate General sponsored the training tour of expert basketball coach J.D. Walsh to south India. His successful visit undoubtedly won over additional converts to the game. In conjunction with the Tamil Nadu Basketball Association (TNBA), the Consulate General organized a series of youth basketball workshops led by Mr. Walsh, including training sessions with the Tamil Nadu State basketball teams. Additionally, Mr. Walsh attended a ceremony to honor



J.D. Walsh leads a training session for young athletes

American Harry Crowe Buck, who is widely credited with introducing basketball to India after founding the YMCA School of Physical Education in Madras in 1920. Mr. Walsh, who is carrying on a nearly century-old tradition of Indo-U.S. cooperation in the area of sports, sees a bright future for basketball in India.

Positive Images



Captions are for photos starting from the upper left and going clockwise

Students of Chennai Corporation Middle School—Thousand Lights gather for a Republic Day photo with Consul General and Mrs. Hopper

Rajiv makes a point at a digital video conference on disability rights co-sponsored by the Consulate General and the Shakti Foundation

Consul General Hopper flags off a student march on World AIDS Day, December 1, 2007



Dance Without Boundaries

The Washington-based dance troupe, Dana Tai Soon Burgess & Co., and the Chennai-based John Britto Dance Company brought together American and Indian dancers in a magnificent performance on January 13 of "Dance Connect," a work that transcends boundaries of nationality and style. This unique collaboration, the culmination of three weeks of workshops in Chennai led by U.S. State Department Cultural Envoy Dana Tai Soon Burgess and his assistant Kelly Southall, connected American and Indian dance forms, the ancient and the modern, the traditional and jazz.



Dana Tai Soon Burgess conducts a workshop in Chennai

In addition to that performance, Dana and Kelly were residents at the John Britto Academy from December 26 to January 14 where they conducted workshops and master classes on modern dance. Local dance students, teachers and professional dancers, already skilled in classical Indian dances, hip-hop, flamenco, salsa, etc., had fun learning new moves and techniques.

As part of the cultural exchange, Dana and Kelly visited leading classical dance schools Bharatha Kalanjali and Kalakshetra and met world-renowned dance gurus V.P. and Shanta Dhananjayan. Dana and Kelly had the opportunity to both watch and participate in a Bharatanatyam class and exchange views with students about modern and classical dance forms.

This cultural exchange goes in both directions. John Britto and some of his dance instructors have also traveled to the United States to enrich their repertoire. Dana and John together have thus created an enduring and dynamic collaboration that bodes well for the future of dance in both of their countries.

Consular Corner:

Move to Ten Fingerprints

For all who follow visa issues, you know that change in our work is a constant. The end of 2007 saw us move from two fingerprint collection to ten print collection for all immigrant and non-immigrant visa applicants. This was a shift worldwide for all of our visa-processing offices.

For our applicants, you will notice a change in equipment at the intake windows. The initial fingerprinting will take place during pre-screening, along with the verification of your data entry and scanning of your photograph. To assist you with this new procedure, we have video-tapes running on televisions in our intake area to illustrate the ten printing steps. Applicants will first be asked to place the left hand fingers (not the thumbs) on the platen (Step 1), followed by the right-hand fingers (Step 2), followed by the two thumbs (Step 3). The interviewing officer will then verify one fingerprint at random.

For a few applicants, we may need to retake the fingerprints after the initial intake procedures. This will be done inside at a counter specifically reserved for retakes. For those applicants who have their fingerprints retaken, no verification by an officer will be necessary.

Consulate General Chennai looks forward to seeing you in the near future!

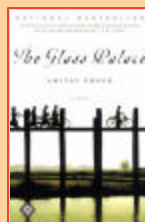


What We Read

Kris Fresonke
Vice Consul

The Glass Palace
by Amitav Ghosh

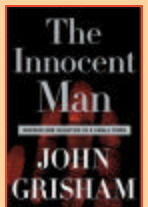
The long coastline of the Bay of Bengal has enjoyed centuries of cross-traffic and cross-pollination. Ghosh's epic novel traces one Indo-Burmese family's history in this region through a century of British occupation, Indian independence, and latter-day Burmese political woes. The writing is exceptionally beautiful, and the tale is hypnotic and melodramatic all at once. As borderlines shift under one's feet and as rulers are deposed in quick succession, love, family and identity collide with history. Ghosh's account of how to live, and live humanely, under such conditions places him in the top ranks of Indian writers.



George Sarmiento
Vice Consul

The Innocent Man
by John Grisham

John Grisham, known best known for modern courtroom dramas, takes a stab at non-fiction with *The Innocent Man*. Years after the death of a young woman in small-town Oklahoma, two innocent men with a history of minor run-ins with the law and with unlikable, acerbic personalities wind up tried, convicted and languishing in jail (one on death row). Grisham offers a far-reaching look at how shoddy police work and overzealous prosecutors use their positions to bring the full weight of the legal system against two innocent dupes. Someone, anyone has to go down for the crime.



Warrior Against Violence

We interviewed Indian-American activist Shamita Das Dasgupta who visited Chennai from New Jersey to offer her perspective on violence against women. She is an adjunct professor at the New York University Law School and co-founder of Manavi, an organization that assists South Asian victims of domestic violence.

Tell us about Manavi and what inspired you to start this organization?

In 1981, a young woman of South Asian descent murdered her husband in New Jersey. She was acquitted based on the horrific abuse and torture she and her children experienced at the hands of her spouse. This incident prompted us, six women of South Asian heritage, to inquire into what was happening in our community. Manavi, founded in 1985, was the first organization in the U.S. to concentrate on the problem of violence against South Asian immigrant women.

Why is there a need for an organization that focuses on South Asians?

Even though South Asian and other American women experience similar kinds of violence, the nuances may be complicated by South Asian cultural factors as well as the women's immigration status. For example, compared to American women in general, South Asian women may experience a more stringent forbiddance of divorce, familial responsibilities that force them to remain in violent relationships, and problems with immigration that are utilized by perpetrators to intimidate them.

What changes have you observed in society's approach and thinking towards domestic violence over the years?

The most encouraging change is the growing rejection of wife/woman-abuse as tolerable or excusable social behavior.

What advice do you have for young women traveling to foreign countries either to work or because of marriage so that they can avoid becoming victims of violence?

They must understand the dynamics of domestic violence and not mistake men's controlling behavior (e.g., jealousy, economic control, emotional put-down, etc.) for signs of love. They need to know more about the host country's laws and service-providing organizations. Women must speak out against abuse and remember that they are not alone but will be supported by agencies and individuals wherever they go. Those traveling to the U.S. can certainly call upon Manavi for help. Our Web site is www.manavi.org.



Dr. Shamita Das Dasgupta
in Chennai

American Library at Chennai Book Fair

In January over 700,000 books-lovers from all over south India attended the annual Chennai Book Fair where for the first time the American Library was represented. Library staff created a colorfully decorated stall with samples of books and journals giving visitors a taste of what the American Library has to offer. Library staffers were also available to answer questions and sign up new members. Over 8,000 people visited the stall and



Chennai Book Fair patrons examine what the American Library has to offer

438 signed up for new Library memberships. Visitors were impressed with the many offerings of the American Library, which include more than 14,000 books, 140 scholarly journals, U.S. Government publications, think-tank reports, newspapers, movies and access to electronic databases. The collection is particularly strong in the areas of American studies, American literature, management, law, international relations, environmental studies, and English as a second language. Many seemed to agree with the statement: "Why buy when you can borrow for free from the Library?"

The American Library in Chennai is currently celebrating its "60th Anniversary of Service" in south India. Its participation in the Chennai Book Fair was part of this anniversary celebration, which will continue with a number of special events in the coming months. Consulate Information Officer Wes Robertson remarked: "I am pleased with the great response we received at the Chennai Book Fair and hope we are able to make this an annual event. Even if you were unable to attend the Book Fair, please come by and pay us a visit in the American Library."

Let us hear from you!

Please write us to let us know what you like, don't like, want to see in future editions, or simply to provide your perspective on an article in this edition. You can e-mail us or send a letter by fax or to the mailing address indicated at bottom of this page. Letters selected for publication may be edited at our discretion. Also, have your friends contact us by e-mail if they would like to subscribe to In Touch South India.